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1917?

By
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Tribune

(Continued.)

Jim went with his father to the police station, where the cells already were full of men and boys taken that morning. The police, looking Nathan Ashby under the charge of conspiracy against the safety of the state, thrust him with two others into a cell. Jim, able to do nothing then, went back to the factory. Smoke was still coming from the chimney, but all work inside was stopped, and the workmen were leaving the building.

"What's the matter?" Jim demanded of Drayton, the superintendent.

"Look at these!" Drayton cried, showing at Jim a sheaf of telegrams.

"They've been coming in all morning as fast as the wires could carry them—and some by telephone too. Cancellations—all cancellations! We'd almost cleared the boards, you know, to start work on the automobile parts for Detroit. That was canceled at 9 o'clock, and everything else we're working on has followed. The country's paralyzed. I tell you. They're shutting down everything everywhere. That's some of the trouble in Chicago, I understand; they're turning off people by the tens of thousands there and everywhere. And stocks! Lord, they never dared open the exchanges! But the banks"—Drayton stopped helplessly. "Oh, it's terrible, and it's only begun!"

Portentous things were happening—portentous without parallel even in the terrible "twelve days" of July and August, 1914. Then the whole world, knowing little of the methods and means of modern destruction, was paralyzed as to normal industry and paid to all new enterprise except the awful obsession of war, and now the world knew that war meant for the invaded nation destruction and ruin on a scale undreamed of before; also in 1914 the world knew that the powers opposed were so equal that neither alliance might work its will upon the other, but now in 1917, upon the neutral exchanges of Europe, American securities—the "standard" securities—a few months before—were obliterated as things of value, and in America everywhere men displayed their fears of the future. Before noon, when a moratorium was declared in every state in the Union, credit had ceased to exist. The men and women who had awakened to a morning of amazement before news office and bulletin board crushed to the banks to withdraw their money, but they clamored uselessly in the streets and beat upon doors which were closed and barred. And business—except the trade in the supply of the barest daily necessities and the manufacture of arms and munitions of war—was dead. The capital cried to the country for aid. "A million men between sunrise and sunset"—the million men who, as the country had been told to believe, would ward off all disaster. And in that day the country pledged to the capital more than 300,000 men, a record for voluntary enlistment under any similar conditions, and, with the million soon to be assured, the country called to the capital now for the protection promised if the volunteers came forward.

So in the cabinet room at the capitol the chief of staff—his name was Stone



"Orders," the policeman told Jim.

—who was charged with the offering of a plan for the defense of the nation, and Admiral Poole, in command of the navy, faced the president and his cabinet across a table upon which a large map was spread. The map showed North America and the western half of the north Atlantic ocean. Upon the continental section of the chart were chalked the numbers and location of the 300,000 men, including the militia, who already had been raised to reinforce the 30,000 men of the regular army being mobilized in the east. At the mobilization point in each state was chalked the number of men "available": Washington, 3,500; Oregon, 4,000; California, 10,000; Texas, 8,000; Minnesota, 10,000; Michigan, 8,000; Illinois, 18,000; Louisiana, 3,000; Maine, 5,000; Vermont, 2,500; Florida, 4,000, and so on throughout the forty-eight states.

"Those figures mean, of course," the general said quietly, "a proportion of from three to five absolutely green and

untrained men, except for their service on the Mexican border. In some states the situation is even worse. Nevada has pledged men, but has had not even a national guard organization for ten years. Entirely neglecting the problems of their equipment, drill and training, the matter of their organization and transport alone will require many days."

As the chief of staff had been speaking an aid had been laying down upon the sea section of the great chart a number of small seed shaped blocks. As the chief of staff gazed at them the eyes of the president and his advisers followed.

"What are those?" the secretary of the interior inquired.

The aid continued to lay down additional blocks as the general replied: "Those are some of the transports of the enemy. According to the figures which the general staff furnished the house some time ago, the number of the first expeditionary force sent to attack us was calculated to be in excess of 250,000 men. We have no reason to believe the force now at sea is less. They are, of course, thoroughly trained troops, completely organized and equipped, and have adequate supplies of ammunition."

The aid placed his last block. The chief of staff bent closer and read the longitudes figures.

"You have placed the transports where, according to our information, they were yesterday," Stone said. He put his hand over the blocks and swept them toward the American coast. "Today, of course, they must be 300 miles nearer."

The president, as he gazed at the new position of the ships, wet his lips and clinched his hands. The secretary of war estimated again with his glance the distance of the enemy's transports from the coast and the distance of the points inland upon which were marked the numbers of the militia levies.

"You will explain," the president directed, "the plan of the general staff for the present contingency."

"That part of the plan already under the authority of the general staff is being carried out, as you see," Stone referred to the map. "The coast defenses are being manned to their full capacity as rapidly as possible, and adequate ammunition is to be supplied as quickly as it can be manufactured. The national guard of the coast states is being mobilized in its own states and will remain to defend its own states until the objective of the enemy is determined. The national guard of other states is being mobilized, as you see, in its own states and as rapidly as possible will be concentrated at a secret railroad center. The regular army is being reformed so that each battalion at peace strength shall be the nucleus of a regiment at war strength, forming a brigade, with the colonel as brigadier, the battalion commanders as colonels and corresponding promotion of other officers and non-commissioned officers and with privates made noncommissioned officers."

"The navy should at once be concentrated in Long Island sound, and the national guard of New York, increased to war strength, should be sent to Long Island. With this done and with the army concentrated at a point unknown to the enemy, it will not be feasible for him to make a landing south of Portland, Me., or north of Chesapeake bay without exposing himself to the double danger of a naval attack and a land attack at the moment of debarkation."

"With the probable result?"

"That the enemy would have to land in a southern state, where he could do little military damage and where he should be left to roam, watched by cavalry, which would destroy all railroads in front of him until our army, equipped from the New England factories and hardened by training, is able to meet him in the open field."

"You mean to sacrifice the south?"

The chief of staff turned patiently to the secretary of the navy. "I mean to choose no section of our country for sacrifice," Stone replied curtly. "I hope to force the enemy to occupy a section where, in addition to having to transport his munitions from over the seas, he will be obliged to bring all food for his soldiers also—a section which cannot be held by us if the northern Atlantic seaboard fall, but which may be redeemed if we hold our industrial centers. To prevent the enemy supplying himself from our storehouses, I ask that measures be taken at once to prevent foodstuffs from moving from the west into the seaboard states."

"And starve our civil population? The whole proposal is infamous!"

CHAPTER VIII.
Fleet Ordered to Sea.

THE chief of staff flushed a little under his tan and his hand on the table twitched. "What is your alternative proposal?" he questioned the secretary of the navy.

"To defend the whole seaboard!"

"You mean to offer battle with the enemy at sea?"

The secretary of the navy hammered the table. "I mean to fight for the whole nation, if we lose every ship, before I would consent to cowardly locking our dreadnaughts into a sound for the protection of one group of states!"

The chief of staff turned from the secretary of war to the admiral beside him.

"The superiority of the enemy at sea as reported by the Salem is conservatively put at twenty-two to fourteen against us, is it not?" he questioned.

Poe nodded. "Conservatively—and if we are able to assemble all our fleet ships in time."

"And that superiority is absolutely decisive?" the president inquired.

"A superiority of 10 per cent has usually proved absolutely decisive, sir."

The secretary of the interior rose to his feet. "I recognize that this is no time for sectional differences, but the

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president has authorized me to advise you of the claims of the part of the country from which I come and which has appealed to me to represent it in his council. The citizens of the Pacific coast states, alarmed by activities on the other shore of the Pacific, have become convinced during the day that as soon as we become involved in the eastern section Japan means to move against California as she moved against Tsingtau when Germany was involved. I have been receiving demands from the governors of all the far western states, mayors of cities and prominent individuals to urge you to send our entire force of first line ships through the Panama canal at once for the protection of our western coast.

"You have just heard that the preponderance of power in the Atlantic is in the hands of the enemy. At best our navy may succeed in the Atlantic in altering the landing point of the enemy. In the Pacific it will be decisive in protecting us from aggression. Further, unless adequate naval protection is furnished the western coast, the states there will be obliged to act for their own protection. That



"I mean to fight for the whole nation."

means, gentlemen, that the western states will not send troops to the aid of the east. The state of Texas already has been obliged to station its troops on the Mexican border to take the place of the regulars now withdrawn."

The Californian sat down. The secretary to the president, who had entered the room the moment before, advanced to the head of the council table and laid a report before the president and above it a telegram in code with the translation of the code words written in pencil below the message. The president read the telegram, jerked back, and then, controlling himself, looked along the table.

"The question as to whether we are to send our fleet to the Pacific or keep it in the Atlantic has been removed from the field of our discussion, gentlemen. General Coethals has just telegraphed that the Gatun dam was destroyed an hour ago by a series of charges of high explosives. For six months at least the Panama canal is closed!"

"Then the fleet must go around the Horn to the Pacific!"

"We must offer battle at once in the Atlantic!"

"We must!"

For a few moments, as he read over the brief report brought him by his secretary, the president permitted the storm of debate to rage about him. Then he silenced it gravely and said:

(To Be Continued.)

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